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CHAPTER Operations and Productivity

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The text suggests four reasons to study OM. We want to understand (1) how people organize themselves for production efficiency, (2) how goods and services are produced, (3) what operations managers do, and (4) the role of operations in our economy and most enterprises.
2. Possible responses include: Adam Smith (with specialization of labor), Charles Babbage (with specialization of labor), Frederick W. Taylor (scientific management), Walter Dill Reuther (unions), and quality management. Other ideas include: computer-aided design, Henry Ford (assembly line), Eliyahu Goldratt (constraint management), Frank and Lillian Gilbreth (motion study), Orlin Whitney (standardization).
3. See references in the answer to question 2.
4. The actual chain will differ depending on the specific organization the student chooses to describe. The important thing is for students to recognize that all organizations operate on a greater or lesser extent, on the three primary functions of operations: manufacturing and marketing and (in the case of services or detailed breakdown of these functions is dependent on the specific competitive strategy employed by the firm).
5. The answer to this question may be similar to that for question 4.
6. Here, however, the student should be encouraged to utilize a more detailed knowledge of a specific employer and include on the chart additional information such as the number of persons employed to perform the various functions and perhaps, the position of the functional areas within the overall organizational hierarchy.
7. The basic functions of a firm are producing, accounting, finance, and operations. An interesting class discussion: "The all-firm organization (customer, government, and public) performs these three functions." The author's hypothesis is, yes, they do.
8. The 10 dimensions of operations management are product design, high quality process, location, layout, human resources, equipment management, inventory, scheduling, equipment and downtime, maintenance, and final delivery services. An excellent way to help students separate and learn the material.
9. Basic areas that are important in improving labor productivity are: (1) basic education (basic training and work skills), (2) job design, (3) social involvement that makes labor available (stress, motivation, compensation, etc.) and (4) maintaining and expanding the skills necessary for changing technology and knowledge, as well as for innovation and invention.
10. Productivity is harder to measure when the task becomes more abstract. A knowledge worker might require the services of an intellectual and flexible laborer to measure. Because the U.S. and many other countries are increasingly "knowledge" economies, productivity is harder to measure. Using labor hours as a measure of productivity for a professional society is not as difficult as in an agricultural society is very different. For example, double crop (planting a second crop) is not as easy as using a very difficult legal case on intellectual property rights and... be significant for professional societies, but not as much as the way of productivity improvement measured in labor hours.
11. Productivity is difficult to measure because precise units of measure may be lacking, quality may not be consistent, and regression variables may change.
12. Many organizations in the flexibility to produce in order to meet specific customer demands, without sacrificing the low cost of production (process). Rapid product development is a source of competitive advantage. Both rely on agility within the organization.
13. Labor productivity in the service sector is hard to improve because (1) many services are labor intensive and (2) they are individually (personally) produced. The customer is paying for the service, the law suit, (3) it is not an artificial task performed by professionals, (4) it is often difficult to measure and automate, and (5) often difficult to evaluate for quality.
14. The firm should track the cost over time to compare with actual coding and tool preparation time. A clear benefit: automation in every operation may reduce flow time, changeover, and improve quality of control.

ETHICAL DILEMMA

With most of the ethical dilemmas in the text, the instructor should present plenty of discussion with the dilemma. The author is hesitant to make a particular choice unless that student also will be on both sides of the dilemma. Many students will be reluctant to accept the dual labor laws of their home country. For instance, American accept overtime working. But Chinese and Indian workers are more likely to expect overtime to be home working or in an oppressive program they have to accept overtime working. Students from more affluent countries may not understand Indian working. However, those who had worked in a very tough or hard place that did not have the same conditions in their home country.

From an economic and self-preservation perspective many countries do work and hard to work. There are still a lot of

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